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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 003711

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD EPRT: SUNNI VOLUNTEERS PROTECT  
NEIGHBORHOODS IN EASTERN BAGHDAD

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2670  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3013  
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 3710

Classified By: E-PRT Leader Eric Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Baghdad 2 BCT E-PRT reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: Dr. Kheder Shukur, assistant to Sheikh Omar Al-Jaboori, Human Rights Advisor to Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi, told E-PRT Team Leader September 25 that local Sunni security volunteers will play a "major role" in protecting Sunni communities. He referred to volunteers as the "immune system of the body (politic)," and said that he believes militant attacks will not occur where neighborhood watch programs are in place. However, he agreed with the Brigade and E-PRT that the volunteer program should start slowly in Baghdad districts east of the Tigris River. Shukur brought with him representatives from neighborhoods in Baghdad's 9 Nissan district to take part in on-going discussions about local Sunni reconciliation efforts (reftels A - C). The representatives discussed significant local developments, including the security improvements and re-opening of Sunni mosques in some areas, and the continual threat posed by militants in other areas. The E-PRT relayed a message from the office of Islamic Supreme Council for Iraq (ISCI) President Abdulaziz Al-Hakim to Al-Jaboori, proposing that they meet. End summary.

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Sunni "Volunteers" Are Protecting Sunni Communities  
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[1](#)3. (C) Dr. Kheder Shukur discussed the role of Sunni security volunteers, stating that they would play a "major role" in protecting Sunni communities. He referred to volunteers as the "immune system of the body (politic)," and said that he believes militant attacks will not occur where neighborhood watch programs are in place. However, he agreed with the Brigade and E-PRT that the program should start slowly. Sunnis are helping Coalition Forces (CF), Shukur said, and will help in the "diagnosis" of Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM). He noted the importance of developing a "good example of reconciliation."

[1](#)4. (C) It is important to know the details about each area in which Sunni volunteers may work, Shukur said. The Sunni goal is to bring about balance within Iraq's security forces. More Sunnis are hence needed in the military and other security forces. Shukur said Sunnis need a "precise ratio" that reflects the past, pre-conflict era, as opposed to the present Sunni-Shia proportion. This is important in part to encourage Sunnis to return to their homes, Shukur argued, although he said many Shia on the east side of Baghdad would resist an attempt to change the Shia-Sunni ratio in the security forces.

15. (C) Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Commander said that providing a balanced perception was very important, as CF do not want Sunnis to be targeted. He said his battalion commanders would work with their respective Sunni contacts to develop the program over time so as to not draw too much attention to it. He declined, however, to project Sunni-Shia ratios. Shukur replied that ratios should be targets. He said the volunteer program should start in the 9 Nissan district neighborhoods Zafaraniya, Zayuna, and Mashtal, areas where there were high numbers of Sunni and where the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) had effective security control. He added that militias needed to be controlled by a force beyond volunteers, explaining that it is important to cut off the flow of arms to Shia militants. These represent the "hands of Iran."

16. (C) E-PRT Team Leader said that counterinsurgency involved a full spectrum approach, with activities in the areas of local government, economic development, essential services, and reconciliation. He reiterated concerns about Iranian influences on Shia militants, and talked about sheikhs being interested in re-taking oversight of their mulhallahs (precincts ) smaller than neighborhoods), in part from feeling their strength being reduced by militant activities.

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Possible Al-Jaboori Meeting with Al-Hakim  
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17. (C) During informal discussion before and after the meeting, the E-PRT learned that Human Rights Advisor to Vice President Al-Hashimi Sheikh Omar Al-Jaboori did not attend this session due to another engagement with the Vice

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President. E-PRT Team Leader relayed an expression of interest by the private office manager of Islamic Supreme Council for Iraq (ISCI) President Abdulaziz Al-Hakim to meet with Al-Jaboori, and offered to facilitate this meeting, if necessary. Shukur reported that Al-Jaboori had received threats from Shia militants, apparently due to his activism with CF.

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Continuing Attacks in Zayuna Neighborhood & Karada  
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18. (C) Updates on the six local reconciliation efforts in 9 Nissan district began with the neighborhood of Zayuna, and the adjacent Karada peninsula of Karada district. Zayuna representative Hammad Khalaf said concerns remained about VBIED incidents, attacks on checkpoints, and possible presence of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. He pledged to share intelligence information with the Brigade. Hammad said Zayuna was 70 percent Sunni, and that Karada peninsula was 30 percent Sunni, with the remaining portion mixed Shia and Christian. He also mentioned that three mosques in Karada had been targeted by militants, with one incident involving the kidnapping of two guards. More mosque guards are needed, he said.

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Sunni Mosques Are Re-Opening in Mashtal  
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19. (C) The representative from Mashtal said Sunnis comprised 60 percent of the population, though others present gave the impression that this number was too high. There are also many Christians in this neighborhood, he said, adding that the population lived in harmony before the conflict. Two Sunni mosques have so far been re-opened. Checkpoints protect the only four entrances to the area. He said that he looked forward to the deployment of Sunni volunteers.

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#### Need to Re-Open Businesses in Obaidy

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¶10. (C) With respect to Obaidy, Ahmed Muneim, a local leader, said it is important to keep unemployed young men away from militias. To do so, it is important to open industry, warehouses, and shops. Many of these businesses, Muneim said, are actually owned by Sunnis who have left due to declining security conditions. "We will call the owners," he explained, "and encourage them to do something positive for their neighborhood."

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#### Security Improves in Beladiat Neighborhood

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¶11. (C) The representative from Beladiat described the neighborhood as secure and quiet, with people feeling comfortable. Although there is a small JAM presence in Mulhallah 738, locals generally cooperate with the ISF. There is an agreement on trash removal, he said, and people will work harder to keep the area clean. He said that they have provided 20 names from the Palestinian compound for the neighborhood watch program, and are waiting for the program to be funded. He added that Sunnis comprise 50 percent of Beladiat; many from Sadr City had moved there since the conflict began. He had no update on the potential visit to the Palestinian compound by Vice President Al-Hashimi.

¶12. (C) A Brigade Lieutenant Colonel mentioned the food drops, bottled water delivery, and medical supplies provided to the Palestinian community, with whom three meetings had been held. Also, he said, the Brigade had completed a scope of work for the clinic, and a fence would be restored. He said that the Brigade will work with the community's leadership to re-integrate the ISF in the area.

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#### Initiating Volunteer Program in Al-Fadhil

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¶13. (C) Regarding Al-Fadhil, Muneim thanked the BCT Commander and a Lieutenant Colonel for efforts to initiate the volunteer program. He said the population of the area is 80 percent Sunni and 20 percent Shia, explaining that residents of Al-Fadhil lived in harmony. He also mentioned the importance of keeping the youth and militants separate, and added that focus would be placed on reconciliation at the local level. During the meeting, Shukur showed a video clip of a purported JAM attack in the Al-Fadhil neighborhood of 9 Nissan; Sunni interlocutors stated that it demonstrated the the Iraq Army assists the militants.

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#### Continuing Attacks in Zafaraniya

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¶14. (C) The representative from Zafaraniya said terrorists were crossing the river into the neighborhood. He also complained about JAM displacement of Sunnis. He claimed that the area is 60 percent Sunni and 40 percent Shia. He added that widows and orphans ) some 500 families - needed assistance, and said payments for victims needed to be easier to attain, lest victims be pushed toward the Shia for assistance.

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#### Palestine Street: NC Member Killed, Mosques Re-Open

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¶15. (C) With respect to Palestine Street, the representative said that the population of the area is 35 percent Sunni. He mentioned the recent killing of a Sunni Neighborhood Council (NC) member, which made it more difficult to get Sunnis to

cooperate with the neighborhood and district councils. So far, six Sunni mosques have been re-opened, with four of them open on Fridays and for Salat prayers, bringing the total to seven Sunni mosques in the area; for a long time, he said, only one had been open. Five guards per mosque is a good start, he added, noting that Sunnis have extensive patrols in the area.

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